

# **SADC MID SEASON STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS MEETING**

**4 - 6 February, 2004  
MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE**

## **SEASONAL OUTLOOK STATEMENT**

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The Southern African Development Community (SADC) held a Mid Season Strategic Assessment and Disaster Preparedness Meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, from 4 - 6 February 2004.

The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Isaias Mondlane, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Mozambique. It was chaired by Mrs. M.S. Lebesa, the Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Defence and National Security in the Kingdom of Lesotho, and was attended by cooperating partners. The meeting was sponsored by the Government of Germany through Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH (inWent), and by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The meeting assessed the status of the 2003/2004 rainfall season in order to comprehend the prospects of the remainder of the season and map the way forward.

### **FINDINGS**

The meeting deliberated on various national and regional presentations on relevant themes, and in particular the following:

#### **Food security concerns over early season drought**

The meeting noted the late onset and erratic rainfall during the first half of the 2003/04 season in most SADC Member States. This has led to an overall reduction in area planted and reduced production prospects for the season. The region may therefore not be able to cover its food requirements for the 2004/05 marketing season. The Member States affected include Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Even the near-normal rains forecast for the February – April period may not improve crop conditions in Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, southern Mozambique, southern Malawi, and parts of South Africa. However, prospects may improve in parts of central Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe if normal rainfall is experienced for the remainder of the season. The food security situation is compounded by the low production that has been experienced in most of these areas over the last three seasons.

#### **Water resources are low**

The participants noted that river, dam, and groundwater levels are low in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa, as a result of poor rainfall performance. The water shortages are affecting agricultural, domestic and industrial water use. A number of Member States are already taking measures to mitigate the impacts of the severe water shortfalls.

### **Localized flooding affecting communities**

Heavy rains in the upper-Zambezi, Cunene and Okavango basins led to flooding in some Member States such as Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and Zambia. This affected communities where riverine agriculture is practiced, as crops were either submerged or washed away.

### **Livestock in poor condition**

Poor pastures have affected major livestock producing Member States and there are likely to be unfavourable economic consequences. The affected Member States include Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, and Swaziland.

### **Increasing food prices**

There is anticipated pressure on prices of staple foods in most markets due to the projected low production. In addition, the meeting noted with concern the fact that the transportation of foodstuffs has become excessively expensive when compared with the value of consignments.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the above observations, the participants recommended the following:

### **1. Assessments required to better understand the levels of vulnerability**

Coordinated multi-sectoral vulnerability assessments should be given top priority, and carried out with urgency, so that an efficient and effective response can be launched to assist affected communities. In order to reduce duplication and build consensus, these assessments must be carried out through existing national and regional structures.

### **2. Make use of second season and winter cropping**

Member States are urged to make use of the near-normal rains expected for the remainder of the season and ground water sources for potential second season crops where this is possible.

### **3. Improve emergency response**

While Member States, UN, and other multilateral agencies have done commendable work towards the provision of food assistance in Member States affected by last year's crop failure, there is need to solve outstanding challenges with targeting and addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security.

### **4. Increased emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness**

Member States and cooperating partners are urged to allocate additional resources towards disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

### **5. Need to strengthen institutional capacities**

The meeting noted that Disaster Management institutions and Vulnerability Assessment Committees have not been fully instituted at the SADC Secretariat and in some Member States. The meeting recommends that the SADC Secretariat and Member States strengthen their disaster management structures and functions. This entails strengthening institutions that are key in these areas, including human resources development.

### **6. Role of trade and markets**

Formal and informal intra-regional food trade should be promoted as the first resort to resolve expected food deficits.

**Done at Maputo, Mozambique**

**6 February 2004**